

Anabiosis

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/59480512) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/59480512>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warnings:	Major Character Death , Rape/Non-Con , Underage Sex
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling
Relationship:	Harry Potter/Tom Riddle Voldemort
Characters:	Tom Riddle Voldemort , Harry Potter
Additional Tags:	Necrophilia , Gothic , Horror , Alternate Universe - Voldemort Wins , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Obsession , Harry is seventeen , Grief/Mourning , Dead Dove: Do Not Eat , Don't copy to another site
Language:	English
Collections:	The Writing Heirs of Slytherin: Official Gothic Fantasy Fest 2024 Collection
Stats:	Published: 2024-10-31 Words: 3,736 Chapters: 1/2

Anabiosis

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Summary

In their final moment together, they had eyes only for each other as was ordained—it was love at the final sight.

Notes

This fic was created for Gothic Fantasy Fest 2024 hosted by The Writing Heirs of Slytherin Discord server.

Poetry Prompt #8: "I felt a funeral in my brain" by Emily Dickinson

Disclaimer: The world of Harry Potter and its characters are not mine.

A/N: Thank you to the fest mods for hosting this fest. I had a lot of fun writing for this prompt.

In the blue twilight hour before dawn, he was waiting in the ancient forest that smelled of earth and decay and something undeniably feral, waiting for the one that was destined to be his. A veil of mist had cast its spell upon the woods, deadening all sound and senses. Moist air caressed his face, and he barely felt it. The hem of his black robe was rimed with frost, and his face was the pallor of death. Holding court amidst creeping undergrowth and verdant foliage, he resembled winter incarnate.

Without a sound the boy materialised before him like an illusion, pale and insubstantial and alone, as though he had already crossed beyond the veil. Gazing at him with those impossibly green eyes of his, he looked unusually young and old beyond his years. The Dark Lord Voldemort smiled. The boy had been regarded by many to be his archnemesis and Achilles' heel, including the old fool Albus Dumbledore. And now the boy was the sacrifice offered to him in the name of peace.

Harry Potter, the boy who lived.

"I'm here, Tom," the boy said, his voice surprisingly steady.

Voldemort narrowed his eyes, and his lips curved into a serpent's smile. "Harry Potter, I commend you for your courage—in more ways than one."

With cruel, hungry eyes he appraised the boy from head to toe. He had waited seventeen long years to claim the boy as his. Then again, seventeen was the right age, for had he not himself made his first kill at the tender age of sixteen? And had he not had his innocence broken through at a much younger age?

It was the end of the chase and the end of their dance. A pang of regret flickered in the depths of his frost-rimed heart. Now that the moment had arrived at long last, he would savour every second of it. Ever so leisurely he drew his yew wand and contemplated its texture and contour like a connoisseur contemplating a work of art. It was fine work indeed.

He looked away from his wand and examined the boy whose fate was inextricably entwined with his. Looking apprehensive and defenceless, the boy nonetheless stood his ground. The Dark Lord knew in his fractured soul that the boy would neither defy his own death nor defile this hallowed ritual of theirs. The boy was a fine piece of work, albeit much flawed.

Ever so slowly he trained his wand at the boy, whose eyes were fixed upon him, as if he had eyes for him and no one else. Yes, this was the way it ought to be, the way it had always been from the moment they laid eyes upon each other in this very forest many moons ago when he was no more than a shadow of a man and the boy a guileless fawn. In their final moment together, they had eyes only for each other as was ordained.

He cast his curse.

The world fell silent and still. He saw him and only him—the boy with hair untamed and dark as the night, his figure lithe and springy as a young shoot, and his eyes brilliant and green as the summer he was born in. The green light of death lit up his youthful face. The

boy was calm, resigned, accepting of his fate. The boy was looking at him, into him, through him at something beyond his reach. The boy's eyes were like the eyes of death.

His frozen heart began to thaw and pound in his chest. The life and warmth he had once been robbed of surged through his cold limbs, his old bones, his sterile loins. A shiver trickled down his spine, and he trembled not in fright but in ardour. Tasting rust in his mouth, he found himself panting for the boy. He was enthralled, rapturous, anguished, in love.

It was love at the final sight.

With a start he attempted to divert the direction of his curse, but it was too late. The curse hit the boy and engulfed him in its green embrace. A heartbeat or two later, the boy began falling backward. He fell for a long time, as though time had ground to a halt. When the boy landed on the ground with a dull thud, Voldemort's heart stopped dead and his breath stolen away. All was silent within him and without. The boy had ensnared his heart in their final moment together, and he had died with the boy.

Like a somnambulist caught in a dream, he shuffled to the boy's side, went down on his knees, and touched the boy's cheek with a trembling hand. A touch of warmth remained on the boy's skin, but life had already departed from those glassy green eyes that were staring forever into the void. He felt for a breath, a pulse on the boy's neck, a beat over the boy's heart—there was none.

He could hear a sound, a persistent thudding as if someone were hewing coffin wood in his heart and in his brain. Gathering the boy in his arms, he kissed the boy's lips. Their first kiss was a bittersweet one, and he imagined feeling those warm, soft lips pressing against his, yielding, pleading, hungering. The boy would defy him nor deny him no more.

Lifting his head, he examined the boy's haggard visage, lingering over the expression, the brow, the eyes, the mouth. The boy looked resigned, perhaps even a little surprised and a little lost. The Killing Curse—death's curse—was captured in his eyes. His lips were parted, as though at any moment a sound would tumble from those shapely lips—a sigh, a name, a moan, a curse. He looked beautiful in death.

The vision stirred up a quiver of desire in the Dark Lord's loins. He had not loved the boy in life, but he came to love him upon the boy's death. He wanted the boy in ways he had not contemplated before, and if they had been alone, he would have joined with him at this very moment. The intensity of his desire surprised him, but he shall not bow to it. Stealing another kiss from the boy's lips, he probed the warm, tender inside of the boy's mouth with his tongue, a prelude—a taste for the pleasures to come.

He cast a spell on the boy's body, the better to keep the body alive and preserve it for the rest of eternity. The boy was his prize, his spoils of war, his beloved. He slipped the boy's wand and glasses into his pocket. When he stood up with the boy nestled in his arms, he found the boy unnaturally light, as if the weight of life had fled the boy's body upon death. And he was thin, malnourished. A foreign emotion welled up inside the Dark Lord and would not be vanquished.

A loud crack echoed in the forest, as though a branch had been snapped by some wayward beast. The veil was lifted, and reality reasserted itself. He could hear the rustle of leaves and the murmuring of his followers, a sound not unlike the buzzing of insects. His mind cleared as if a spell had been lifted, and he understood—the prophecy, the scheme spun by one Albus Dumbledore, and the boy's role in it all. He cursed the old wizard, mad genius or manipulative tyrant he could not rightly tell. In the next moment, the madness passed and he was calm once more.

"M-my Lord..." one of his followers stammered.

Displeased at being disturbed, he turned to his dumbstruck followers and cast a cold look at each of them. No one dared to meet his eye or breathe another word. The half-giant was struggling silently against his magical bindings, his mouth sealed shut by a spell. Tears streamed down his bearded, bruised face. The half-giant mattered as little to the Dark Lord as a pebble in the lake.

"You have been deceived by Albus Dumbledore," Voldemort whispered, knowing his voice was heard by every wizarding denizen and magical being within the grounds of Hogwarts. "He had always meant for the boy to die by my hand, and you have sent your chosen one to his death. Very well, I shall take the boy and honour my part of the bargain."

To his followers he said, "Suppress any resistance and spare the rest. Lord Voldemort shall show mercy to those who seek it."

With the boy in his arms, he turned away from his audience and ventured forth into the entrails of the forest. Nagini, ever his faithful servant, slithered behind her master like a long, serpentine shadow. No one dared to follow; no one dared to block their path; no one dared move. They could only watch on as their lord carried off the chosen one like a bridegroom carrying off his bride to their nuptial chamber, and the boy, his head lopping, looked as if he were fast asleep or freshly dead.

* * * * *

In the first ray of dawn, the dilapidated ancestral house of the Riddle family crouched atop the hill like a disfigured beast, its skin peeling away, its bones exposed to the element, and its many eyes nothing more than empty sockets nailed shut by wooden boards. What was once a well-tended expanse of green lawn had succumbed to the wild. Vines crept across broken brick work in a possessive snare.

Carrying his dead beloved in his arms, Voldemort crossed the unkempt garden and climbed the once magnificent stone steps of the manor-house. The heavy, defaced wooden double door slid open of its own accord as if to welcome its rightful master's return. He crossed the threshold and stepped into the dimly lit entrance hall. The air smelled of damp, mustiness and decay. Nagini trailed after her master into the house and soon vanished into one of the doorways in search of food.

Without a need to light his way, Voldemort ascended the stone staircase, his senses attuned to his surroundings, and his footsteps muffled by the dust underfoot. The corridor beyond was

shrouded in shadow, but he remembered the way. A door fell open to his whim and will, and silent as a snake on the prowl, he passed through the corridor and into the chamber.

The windows were boarded up, admitting little more than a sliver of light into the room. With a thought he conjured candlelight out of thin air, illuminating what was once an elegant bedroom that had since fallen into dereliction. Stained white sheets covered the furniture like funeral shrouds. The mattress was dirty and moth-eaten. The blue damask wallpaper was peeling, and the ceiling was stained with water marks. A layer of dust blanketed every surface in the room, and cobwebs encroached every corner with their silken tendrils.

After lowering the boy onto an armchair, he took out his wand and cast his spells. The grime and dust on the bed vanished without a trace. A white sheet of linen was spread across the bed, and pillows were piled against the carved oak headboard. With that done he levitated the boy's lifeless body and laid him down on the bed. Finally, he placed the boy's glasses by the bedside.

Sitting by the boy's side, he searched the boy's body and found a wand snapped in two pieces. It was a curious find. He pocketed the pieces without thinking much of it. Beneath the guttering candlelight, the boy possessed the appearance of life. Nevertheless, his glassy green eyes resembled a shutter, revealing nothing and reflecting nothing in their depths.

He stroked the boy's cold cheek, his fingers feeling a hint of stubble. He pulled up the boy's shirt and slipped a hand inside, feeling for the faintly beating heart that was infused with his magic, and the lean torso he had yet to feast upon. Pulling down the boy's trousers, he took the boy's limp penis in his hand, examining it, toying with it, noting how young it appeared. He bent down and pressed a kiss on the boy's cold lips, a true love's kiss.

The boy did not wake.

He could hear a sound in his head, a strange knocking as though someone were chiselling a coffin in his brain. Brushing back the jet-black strands that had fallen over the boy's brow, he touched his lips to the lightning mark that marked the boy as his and bound their fates together. As his loins throbbed with arousal and longing, he was stricken with a pang of emotion he could not entirely name.

"Harry," he whispered.

A heavy stillness descended upon the room, and he could hear nothing but the repetitive knocking in his head. He kissed the boy deeply, fervently, hungrily, his tongue entangling with the boy's tongue and his spittle dripping into the boy's mouth like drops of elixir. How he longed to sheathe himself inside the boy and join with him in the flesh—but it must wait.

After lingering over the boy's lips for a moment longer, he peered into the boy's eyes—eyes that beheld nothing but death. A shudder coursed through his body even as his loins ached with unquenchable want. Impulse and instinct possessed him and would not be denied. Moving as though in a trance, he straddled the dead boy and masturbated like a wanton who knew not of restraint. He roamed his eyes over his beloved, his mind filled with thoughts and memories of the boy he loved.

Before long he came with a grunt and spilled his fluid all over the boy's stomach and groin. The rush of euphoria soon passed into nothing more than the tingling of the afterglow. It left him feeling empty and vaguely unfulfilled. The pounding of his heart soon subsided, and his breathing eased. He looked down at the boy. Half-undressed and splattered with his fluid, the boy looked strangely desirable and delectable.

Harry, his beautiful Harry.

With some reluctance Voldemort straightened his clothes and climbed off the boy. He wiped the boy clean with much care, paying particular attention to the boy's genitals. There was one more task he must perform. With his newly acquired elder wand, he wove webs of spells and wards into the fabric of reality, enveloping the ruined Riddle House in an intricate lacework of protective magic.

Leaning over the boy, he murmured, "I shall return soon." After pressing a chaste parting kiss on the boy's lips, he snuffed out the candlelight and left the room. As soon as the door was closed, the lock snapped into place.

Nagini was waiting at the bottom of the stairs, her head raised inquisitively. "Guard the boy well till my return," Voldemort hissed to his faithful servant, and with that the Dark Lord took flight and returned to the battlefield of Hogwarts castle.

* * * * *

On the third day, Hogwarts fell to the Dark Lord and his followers. By nightfall, the Dark Lord had vanished once more into the night in a whirlwind of black silk and shadow and smoke, a nightmare returning to the land whence he came. Under the cover of night, he stole into the darkness of the Riddle House like a revenant and ascended the dusty stone steps, eager to see his sleeping beauty.

With a creak the door to the boy's bedchamber opened to his touch, and a faintly unpleasant smell wafted the air. Candlelight flickered to life by the bedside, illuminating the boy in his pale, half-clothed glory as the Dark Lord had left him. Crossing the room without delay, Voldemort went to the boy, rested his hand upon the boy's faintly beating heart, and gently kissed his mouth. The night was young, and the boy shall be his forevermore.

In the gloom of the candlelit bathroom, the boy was stripped of his soiled clothes, and his bowels were emptied with a spell. In the rusted cast-iron claw-foot bathtub, the boy was bathed in scented water and washed thoroughly from the inside out. Dried and enveloped in a white sheet, he was duly carried back to the bedchamber and onto a freshly made bed.

The Dark Lord disrobed and joined his young lover in bed, fondling him, kissing him, tasting him, making love to him amidst dust and cobwebs and decay. The boy tasted of death and the herbs he was bathed in—a bitter, earthy scent. He ran his forked tongue over the boy's nipples, navel and genitals. Burying his face between the boy's legs, he took the boy's cock in his mouth, tasting him, pleasuring him, biting down lightly and leaving his mark on the boy's flesh.

Kneeling between the boy's legs, he directed the boy's body with a turn of his thought. Invisible strings coiled around the boy's knees and lifted his legs. With another spell he prepared the boy and opened him up. Had someone else laid with the boy before he did? A flicker of possessiveness licked at his heart, and his yearning for the boy pulsed in his loins like a living thing. No, it mattered not if someone else had claimed the boy in the past. The boy belonged to him now.

Without a sound he eased his way into the boy, sinking into him as deeply as he could go until he could go no further. It was like sinking into the night, and the boy's insides stretched and enveloped his arousal like a membrane. He shivered and let out a long, deep breath. He had waited for seventeen years, and it was worth the wait. He feasted his eyes upon the boy's naked body. They were two halves of the same being and two halves of the same soul.

He could hear a sound in his head, a dull thudding as if someone were thumping on a door or the lid of a coffin in his brain. Moving inside the boy in time to the thudding in his head, he was mesmerised by the way the boy yielded to him in death, and by the sensations the boy stirred up in him. Enslaved, he could not look away from the boy's visage.

The boy's dull green eyes stared at the ceiling; the sensual mouth parted in a silent moan; and the boyish face was frozen in the thrall of death. He looked almost alive, as though at any moment this marionette of a boy would come to life, panting and moaning and moving in time with him to their mutual release.

An emotion he had never felt before welled up inside him and dragged him under. He wanted to stay inside the boy, to remain joined with him, to never part with him. The alternative was too frightening for him to contemplate. Sheathed inside his dead lover and shaken to the core, he could feel the coming of his own impending death, and with a shudder and a grunt he came and died into the boy.

In the blissful whiteness of release, a veil fell over his eyes, and something warm and wet burnt a trail down his cheeks. Bemused, he touched his face, and his fingers came away wet with tears. As a harsh laughter burst from his lips, he covered his face and wept. In the cobwebbed corner of his delirious mind, he had always known. He had killed the one he loved, and the boy was lost to him forever. What he had claimed was little more than an empty shell devoid of a soul, a shell he had kept alive with magic.

A lifetime passed before he uncovered his face and stared at the unmoving body beneath him—a body that might be fast asleep or freshly dead. He felt hollow, a husk of a man. He withdrew from the boy and caressed the boy's cold cheek. There must be a way to bring the boy back from the dead—not as a mindless, shambling inferius but as the living, breathing young wizard he once was.

Tom.

He froze. In the stillness of the night, he thought he could hear the boy whisper his name, and yet the boy's lips did not move an inch. He looked wildly about him, searching for the spirit of his beloved. Amidst flickering candlelight and writhing shadows, there were no other souls but his own, fractured, forlorn, lost.

He sprang to his feet and prowled to the open door. Nothing stirred in the dusky corridor, not even a shadow, and not a sound could be heard but for the pounding of his heart. A spell of melancholy stole over him, and he returned to the boy's bedside in defeat. It was little more than a wild flight of fancy of a grieving soul.

Looking down at the body he had ravished, he peered into the boy's dead green eyes, and a cold thrill trickled down his spine. "Harry," he murmured. The boy was as silent as stone. He had hated his own name, but he would forgive the offence if the boy was the one who spoke his name. He would do anything to hear the boy call his name again.

"Harry."

He took the boy's hand and kissed his lips, sealing his vow. He could feel a funeral in his brain, a door creaking and heavy feet treading, but whose funeral it was he could not rightly say.

Conjuring a blanket for him and the boy, he snuffed out the candles and lay beside his beloved on their nuptial bed, naked skin to naked skin. The boy's scent and the closeness of their bodies tempted him with the promise of pleasure he had already known, and his body responded to the silent seduction like a boy who had just had his first taste of the forbidden fruit.

Succumbed to his instinct, he pulled the boy to him and sheathed into the dark, secret place that was his and his alone, as if to fill the void within the boy and within himself. With his legs entangled with the boy's, he held the boy tenderly and closed his eyes. The intimacy of their connection and the scent of the boy's hair lulled him into a deep, pleasurable slumber. Through night and day he slept like the dead, and neither dreams nor nightmares visited his sleep.

* * * * *

To be continued...

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